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Report to
the Honourable Rene Brunelle
Ontario Minister of Community and Social Services

Investigation and Inquiry into Violence in Amateur Hockey

William R. McMurtry, Q.C.



MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES

UNDER THE PUBLIC INQUIRIES ACT, 1971

and

UNDER THE ATHLETICS CONTROL ACT, R.S.O.

1970, CHAPTER 35



**INVESTIGATION AND INQUIRY INTO
VIOLENCE IN AMATEUR HOCKEY**



WILLIAM R. McMURTRY, Q.C.

COMMISSIONER



The Honourable Rene Brunelle
Minister of Community and Social Services
Province of Ontario
Parliament Buildings
Toronto, Ontario

CP.

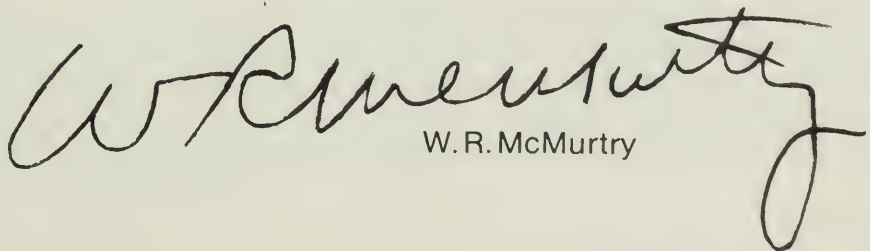
Sir:

Pursuant to your directions to me, I am pleased to advise that I have completed my Inquiry into Violence in Amateur Hockey.

I am pleased to present herewith my report.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,



W.R. McMurtry

Dated at Toronto this 21st day of August, 1974.

"Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing."

Vince Lombardi

"If you can't beat them in the alley, you can't beat them on the ice."

Conn Smythe

"I'm more valuable in the penalty box than I am sitting on the bench..."

... I'm not gonna stop fighting even if I could. It's one of my assets and if it helps win games I'm going to keep fighting."²

Dave Schultz
Philadelphia Flyers
1974 Stanley Cup Champions

"Roget's Thesaurus equates good sport with good loser, and sets out as synonyms with the noun sport, the words fun, play and amusement.

"At one time in sport, the losing team used to call for three cheers for the winners and the winning team reciprocated with three cheers for the losing team. Do you remember those days?

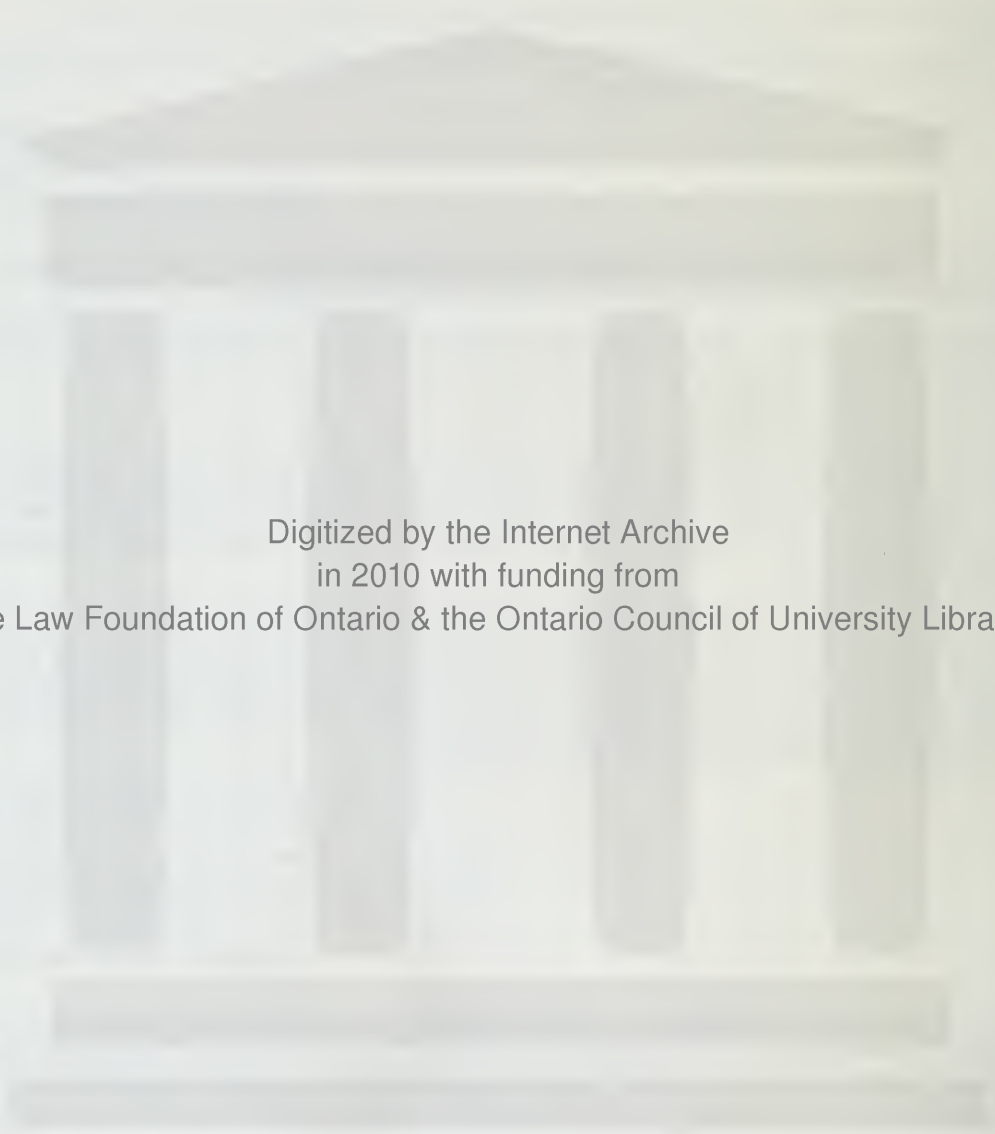
"How far have we travelled away from this concept when on the eighteenth of February 1973, one boy had to be taunted and insulted for the accident of birth which gave him a darker skin, and another boy, at least according to many Crown witnesses, was in such fear that when he left his team dressing room he was accompanied by an escort.

"I say these things because I am sure that you have been appalled, as I have been, while listening to the evidence to hear how sportsmanship has been so lost, by fifteen and sixteen year old participants and by some spectators, as to make what once was the sport of hockey something that practically has disappeared from sight. And this in what has been termed a House League."

From His Honour Judge Barry Shapiro's
charge to the jury in the case *Regina vs.
Smithers*, where 16 year old Paul Smithers
was charged and convicted of manslaughter
as the result of a death from a fight after
a Midget House League game.

"Sport is an order of chivalry, a code of ethics and aesthetics, recruiting its members from all classes and all peoples. Sport is a truce; in an era of antagonisms and conflicts, it is the respite of the gods in which fair competition ends in respect and friendship. Sport is education, the truest kind of education—that of character. Sport is culture because it creates beauty and, above all, for those who usually have the least opportunity to feast upon it."³

Rene Maheu,
General Director, UNESCO



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INQUIRY INTO VIOLENCE IN AMATEUR HOCKEY

I. TERMS OF REFERENCE

On April 25th, 1974, pursuant to Section 7 of The Athletics Control Act, and the specific request of Robert Secord, the Director of Sports and Recreation for the Province of Ontario, The Honourable Rene Brunelle, Minister of Community and Social Services appointed me a Commissioner and directed me as follows:

"To hold an investigation into the the circumstances surrounding violence in the Bramalea-Hamilton Junior B game of last April 16th, the withdrawal of the Bramalea Blues Hockey Club and its officials from the Ontario Hockey Association's 1974 playoff series and the subsequent suspension of that Club by the Association. Your investigation should explore any implications for amateur hockey that these incidents might have. Upon the completion of the inquiry, your report together with your findings and recommendations should be forwarded to me."

For the purposes of my inquiry I attribute to the word "violence", the natural meaning as set out in the Oxford Concise Dictionary as follows:

"unlawful exercise of physical force, intimidation by exhibition of this."

For purposes of my investigation and study I do not consider the application or use of force within the strict rules of the game as "violence".

II. PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION AND RESEARCH

The research and investigation for my inquiry involved five main areas, namely as follows:

1. The Hamilton-Bramalea game of April 16th, 1974.
2. Analysis and review of various relevant reports, studies, articles and research on the problems of hockey and violence in athletics and amateur hockey.
3. Consultation with various social scientists, sports psychologists, educationalists and experts in physical fitness and recreation.
4. Interviewing players, coaches and officials involved on all levels of hockey, both amateur and professional.
5. Review of Briefs submitted by interested persons and organizations.

RE: 1. The Hamilton-Bramalea game of April 16th, 1974.

The initial investigation into this game involved the following:

- (a) A review of all newspaper clippings and documentary evidence and witness statements including referee's report of the game in question. Also obtaining and examining some film clips of this game.
- (b) Interviewing officials and in particular the individual players on an informal basis where not only the events of the game were reviewed but also their attitude and philosophy towards hockey generally.

In my discussions with the individual players it was determined through initial trial and error that the best form of interview was with two or three of the players together at the same time. In this environment there was a very free flow of ideas and discussion of such matters as the factors influencing their use of "violence" and their views on the rules of the game as presently structured, etc. In regards to this aspect of my investigation I received the full co-operation of all of the officials of the Bramalea and Hamilton organizations and the success of these interviews was due in large part to that cooperation.

RE: 2. Analysis of various reports, research and studies relating to violence in sports and in particular the problems in amateur hockey.

This aspect of my investigation can be broken down into several areas as follows:

- (a) A review of Federal and Provincial studies and reports prepared by various commissions including the following:
 - Canadian Amateur Hockey Association. "A Presentation to the Committee Reporting into the Rights of Individuals in Amateur Sports (Hockey)." St. Albert, October, 1973.
 - Department of Community and Social Services. "A Position Paper on Amateur Hockey in Canada". Toronto, January 1972.
 - Department of Culture and Youth. "Final Report of the Saskatchewan Hockey Task Force". Regina, April, 1974
 - Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation. "Report of an Inquiry into the Rights of Individuals in Amateur Sports", by L.W. Downey Research Associates Ltd., Edmonton, July 1973.
 - Department of National Health and Welfare. "Federal Government Hockey Study Report, Amateur Hockey in Canada, a Blueprint for the 70's and Beyond," by G. Meagher, Ottawa 1971.
 - Department of National Health and Welfare. "The Report on Amateur Hockey in Canada", by the Hockey Study Committee of the National Advisory Council on Fitness and Amateur Sport. Ottawa, January 1967.

Department of National Health and Welfare. "Minor-Age Hockey in Canada". A report of the Hockey Study Committee of the National Advisory Council on Fitness and Amateur Sport, Part 2. Fredericton, October 1973.

Department of Youth. "Final Report of the Alberta Department of Youth Hockey Study Committee". Edmonton, November 1967.

Hockey Canada. "Hockey—I am..." A Research Report prepared by Martin Goldfarb Consultants, April 1971.

- (b) A review of the research by various social scientists, psychologists, psychiatrists and physical education specialists dealing with the problems of amateur sport, violence in sport, and in particular violence in hockey. A full bibliography of the studies, articles and books is set out in Appendix A to this report.

RE: 3. Consultation with various social scientists, sports psychologists, educationalists and experts in physical fitness and recreation.

In considering and preparing this report I have consulted with the following individuals:

- (a) Dr. Mike Smith, York University, Department of Sociology, former college athlete, high school coach, who has made a comprehensive study of violence in sport and in particular violence in amateur hockey.
- (b) Dr. James Duthie, University of Windsor, social psychologist who has been involved in comprehensive research during the past few years in the problems of amateur sport, in particular Little League Baseball, and Minor League Hockey in the Windsor area. He is also one of the founding members and directors of the Sports Institute for Research.
- (c) Tom Watt, assistant professor, faculty of Physical and Health Education, University of Toronto, head coach University of Toronto Hockey Team, manager of Canadian Student National Team.
- (d) The late Lloyd Percival, international expert in physical fitness and sport, founder of the Fitness Institute.
- (e) Barry Lowes, former consultant to Ontario Government in Sport and Recreation, graduate in physical education from University of Toronto and New York University, former chairman of the Toronto Board of Education, owner and operator of a summer camp for twenty-three years.
- (f) Professor Bruce Kidd, Department of Physical Education, University of Toronto, former international athlete, co-author of *The Death of Hockey* (1973), Researcher for L'Heureux Report on Amateur Hockey in Canada (1967).
- (g) Maurice Regimbal, chairman, Department of Physical Education, Laurentian University, chairman of Hockey Canada Development Committee.
- (h) Carl Naumoff, former college athlete and presently consultant in Physical Health and Education for the Toronto Board of Education.
- (i) Gary Leech, Physical Education teacher, Toronto Board of Education, president of the Toronto Public School Athletic Association.
- (j) Jack Gibson, graduate student, University of Alberta, Department of Psychology. Mr. Gibson, who wrote his Master's thesis on the problems of the organization of minor league hockey, is presently working on a Ph.D. thesis, the subject of which is Violence in Hockey. He is also a former Junior A, college and international hockey player having been a member of Canada's National Team. He is presently playing professionally in the World Hockey Association.
- (k) Robert Nadin, graduate in Physical Education, teacher, director of Ontario Hockey Association referees' clinics, and experienced referee in Ontario Hockey Association, international and Olympic hockey.

- (I) Ronald Smith, graduate physical education, technical director of the Ontario Hockey Association in charge of development of coaches' clinics, Senior A player, former Junior A player, experienced in numerous international hockey games.

RE: 4. Players, Coaches and Officials in Amateur and Professional Hockey.

In order to obtain the widest possible perspective to appreciate the problems of not only amateur hockey but professional hockey, I was also able to communicate with and interview personally numerous officials, players, managers and coaches in the National Hockey League, World Hockey Association, College Hockey, OHA, Junior A series and at all levels of minor amateur hockey.

Some individuals specifically requested that their interviews not be publicized in view of the fact that they had some specific criticism of the hockey establishment and in particular the present Rule structure. They were concerned as to whether or not this might have an adverse effect on their careers as they are still active either as players or officials in professional hockey.

I do not intend to list all persons whom I have interviewed but I did wish to formally acknowledge my appreciation for the following individuals who gave me considerable co-operation and assistance in my investigation:

- i. Jack Devine, president CAHA;
- ii. Cliffe Phillips, president OHA;
- iii. Billy Harris, coach of the Toronto Toros WHA;
- iv. Bobby Hull, playing coach, Winnipeg Jets WHA;
- v. Pit Martin, president NHL, Players Association;
- vi. Scotty Morrison, referee in chief NHL;
- vii. Buck Houle, general manager Toronto Toros;
- viii. Gus Bodnar, coach Oshawa Generals OHA, Junior A;
- ix. Carl Brewer, former NHL and international player presently playing in the WHA;
- x. Brian Glennie, NHL player, former member Canadian National Team and Team Canada;
- xi. Bob Baun, former NHL player;
- xii. Steve King, WHA player, former member Canadian National Team;
- xiii. Jack Gibson, WHA player referred to above;
- xiv. Ron Smith, referred to above;
- xv. Robert Nadin, referred to above;
- xvi. Larry Fullan, former All-American college player now playing professional hockey;
- xvii. Steve Warr, former All-American college player now playing WHA;
- xviii. Joe Kane, former player and coach, College Junior A and Senior A level. Former president of the Central Professional League.

I also wish to acknowledge my appreciation for the assistance of Douglas Philpot who in addition to being involved in amateur hockey on several levels, is also the editor of Face-Off, The Hockey Weekly, the only periodical that I am aware of which is devoted exclusively to minor league hockey in Ontario. With his assistance I was able to review game summaries from literally hundreds of minor league games played in Ontario this year which was quite useful in my investigation.

RE: 5. Review of Briefs.

The following list of briefs was also received and each was considered in the preparation of my report:

1. Dr. Mike Smith, Department of Sociology and Physical Education, York University;

2. Dr. James H. Duthie, Faculty of Physical Education, University of Windsor;
3. Ron Smith, technical director of the OHA;
4. Group of interested doctors from the Toronto Sick Children's Hospital;
5. Maurice Regimbal, director of Hockey Canada;
6. Dr. W.J. L'Heureux, Faculty of Physical Education, Graduate Program, University of Western Ontario;
7. Barry Lowes, former chairman, Toronto Board of Education, educator, camp owner;
8. Wallace Rockall, president of the Metropolitan Toronto Hockey League;
9. A.C. Morson, president of the North Toronto Hockey Association;
10. Robert Nadin, supervisor of referees, OHA;
11. Dr. John Rutherford, Queen's University;
12. Brian Proctor, head hockey coach, Upper Canada College;
13. David Dennis, president of Sutton Place and a minor hockey league sponsor;
14. Pat Northey, president of Interaction Ltd;
15. D.F. Anthony, 315 Patricia Avenue, Willowdale, Ontario;
16. W.C. Bain, executive director, Hamilton East Kiwanis Boys Club;
17. Patrick Reid, MPP, Rainy River District.

Acknowledgements

As my inquiry was the direct result of a request by Robert Secord, the Director of the Sports and Recreation Bureau of the Government of Ontario, responding to certain questions raised in the legislature, I also made a point of communicating with representative members of all three caucuses. In particular, I am grateful for the support and encouragement given me in my task by The Honourable Rene Brunelle, Minister of Community and Social Services, The Honourable Thomas Wells, Minister of Education and The Honourable Dennis Timbrell, Minister responsible for the Youth Secretariat, Mr. Pat Reid, MPP, and Mr. Bernard Newman, MPP of the Official Opposition, and Mr. Jack Stokes, MPP, and Mr. Elie Martel, MPP of the NDP Caucus.

I am also indebted to the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and in particular Robert Secord, director of the Sports and Recreation Bureau, and Donald Martyn, executive director of the Community Services Division. Apart from their strong practical and moral support, they also provided me with my indispensable researcher and assistant, Karen Madden, a graduate student in Physical Education from the University of Windsor. Her efforts in arranging interviews, obtaining material and organizing my research was surpassed only by her patience in reading my handwriting. An example of her ingenuity and perseverance was her procurement of a film clip from the Hamilton-Bramalea game from the CBC French network after several days of investigation and search.

The assistance and contribution of Douglas Rutherford, Q.C., and his assistant William Orr of the Ministry of Community and Social Services' Legal Services Branch is also acknowledged.

In addition to the research, consultations and briefs set out above, I was also the recipient of numerous letters and phone calls from interested persons, parents and officials involved in amateur hockey. The concern and sincerity of those persons who contacted me was compelling and impressed me as to how many people are hopeful of some constructive changes in hockey, particularly amateur hockey as a result of my investigation and report.

In my inquiry I was fortunate in being able to discuss most of the issues with members of the news media. In particular I appreciated the interest and concern shown by Jim Coleman (Southam Press), Dick Beddoes (Globe and Mail), Trent Frayne and Frank Orr (Toronto Star), George Gross (Toronto Sun), Fred Sgambati (CBC Radio) and Ernie Miller (London Free Press).

III. PUBLIC HEARING

At the completion of my preliminary investigation and research as described above it was arranged to hold a public hearing. Pursuant to the terms of the Public Inquiry Act, I designated the following parties as having an interest with the right to be represented by counsel at the hearing:

- a) Ontario Hockey Association;
- b) Bramalea Blues Hockey Club;
- c) The Hamilton Finocchio-Cupido Red Wings Hockey Club;
- d) National Hockey League.

Notice was given to the above mentioned parties and they were in fact all represented at the public hearing.

It was my decision to include the NHL as an interested party because from my initial investigation and research the evidence was clear and overwhelming that the conduct and standards applied in the NHL were having a profound effect on virtually every boy playing amateur hockey in every league regardless of age or standard of competition.

Prior to the public hearing I personally contacted Mr. Clarence Campbell, the president of the National Hockey League, and he expressed a complete willingness to co-operate and assist me in my inquiry. I should mention at this point that as Mr. Campbell does not reside in Ontario he would not have been subject to the power of any subpoena. Although for reasons outlined below, I am very critical of the present attitude of the NHL toward violence as reflected in the standards of their play and the structure and application of their rules, I am nevertheless appreciative of the personal courtesy and co-operation extended to me by Mr. Campbell throughout my investigation.

The hearings were held on May 27th and 28th, and June 3rd, 4th and 5th. The actual transcript of the proceedings covers some 1,256 pages.

Forty-two witnesses were called to give evidence not only about the specific game and subsequent events, but more important, about some of the general causes of violence in hockey and possible solutions. No attempt was made to call every person who might have a valid comment to make on the state of hockey, as such a group would be enormous.

A real effort was made however to give representative points of view.

IV. FINDINGS

(a) Hamilton-Bramalea Game of April 16, 1974

This clearly was a violent game, 189 minutes in penalties were assessed, yet nearly all the witnesses who were present at the game believed more penalties should have been called. Several vicious fights resulted only in minor penalties, and at least three players admitted to participating in fights where no penalties were awarded.

Injuries were received by five players and one team official as a direct result of the fighting and brawling.

On one occasion a Hamilton player left the penalty box to resume his fight, and two players sent to the dressing room engaged in an altercation in the hallway where they were joined by other players, officials and fans.

The fans who were approximately seven hundred and fifty in number were orderly until the game became violent, and by the end of the second period large numbers of them were out of control. The two policemen on duty were forced to call in reinforcements. At one time fourteen police officers were present at the Arena.

The referee himself termed it the most difficult game he had personally ever handled.

From the evidence and my investigation it would be impossible to attribute the unfortunate circumstances and violence in this game to one team, group of individuals or to any one specific cause.

Although there were some unique factors present in the Bramalea-Hamilton game, I was satisfied that the actual causes of violence were symptomatic of a trend in amateur hockey which threatens to become much worse if remedial steps are not taken.

It is more than significant that the OHA executive in refusing to find justification for Bramalea's withdrawal from the series came to the conclusion that the game of April 16th was not as violent as many other games played in amateur hockey in recent years. This may well be so, in which case it does not speak well for the state of amateur hockey.

From my investigation I am aware of at least three other occasions in recent years where a team playing amateur hockey in Ontario has refused to complete a game or a series through fear of violence resulting in injury to players.

In reviewing accounts of countless games two facts become evident:

- (i) There are hundreds if not thousands of games played each year which bear no resemblance to the Hamilton-Bramalea fiasco.
- (ii) There is however a substantial increase in violence in amateur hockey, and more alarming, the use of violence as a tactical instrument to assert superiority over an opponent. It is also clear that this type of conduct is becoming more prevalent in the younger age groups. Violent games which were once unheard of at the pee wee (12) and minor bantam (13) level are now not uncommon. It is definitely possible to establish the reasons for this trend. I have attempted to outline these in Part V.

Hopefully it is also possible to effect some changes to improve the situation.

(b) Withdrawal of Bramalea and Subsequent Inquiry and Decisions of the OHA

The game of April 16th left an aftermath of emotion, confusion and even hysteria. Rumours and hearsay accusations were rampant. The unfortunate situation facing the Bramalea executives was compounded by reason of the fact that the second game of the series had to be played in Hamilton within twenty-four hours. It was in this setting that the Bramalea team elected to withdraw from further participation in the series.

Their decision clearly had a very adverse effect on not only the Hamilton team, but also on the entire OHA hockey structure.

It is hopefully a good thing that Bramalea took the action they did which led to the subsequent Government inquiry into amateur hockey violence. It is perhaps an unfortunate aspect that the news media focused most of the blame on the Hamilton team and the OHA executive, when this particular game was only symptomatic of a trend prevalent in amateur hockey, caused for the most part by reasons beyond the present control of either an individual team or the OHA executive. There were several problems relating to the original OHA hearing and resulting suspensions.

In the first place, the constitution and rules by which they and all their member teams are governed do not contemplate a situation such as occurred on April 16, 1974.

They do however have very specific provisions relating to a team defaulting a game or series. Unfortunately under their rule structure there is no way a game can be defaulted legally less than seventy-two hours before the scheduled time. Obviously there was no conceivable way Bramalea could withdraw from the series without being in breach of the OHA rules. Once having defaulted, they were caught by the provisions which insist that the mandatory suspension stay in effect until suitable compensation is given to the non-defaulting team, only then can they be re-instated.

More important, the OHA did not have the resources, financial or otherwise to launch or consider a comprehensive investigation into the Bramalea-Hamilton game or the question of violence in amateur hockey generally.

It is significant also that the OHA relies on gate receipts from the play off games for approximately 47% of their total revenue—they were caught in an unintentional conflict of interest. They are vested with the responsibility of upholding the rules governing the member teams; yet they must also act as a judicial body where they have a financial interest in the case. Furthermore there is really no appropriate appeal tribunal from their decision.

It would be easy to criticize the OHA executive regarding the manner in which the hearing was conducted. I will however resist that temptation as it would perhaps be unfair and serve no useful purpose.

I am far more concerned with considering ways and means of preventing a recurrence of the Hamilton-Bramalea situation and its unfortunate aftermath.

Following the public hearing I was in communication with the solicitors representing both the OHA and the Bramalea hockey team.

It was my ardent hope that a compromise solution would be worked out to ameliorate the harsh effect of the original suspensions involving the team, coach, trainer and club president.

I was gratified to learn that on June 27, 1974 the OHA executive ratified an amended decision of an executive sub-committee. The net result was that subject to certain probationary terms the Bramalea team, its trainer and coach were re-instated, although the suspension of the president remained in effect.

Full credit should be given to the parties for working out this settlement which has been endorsed by all parties as an equitable result.

I am particularly gratified for the purposes of my investigation and report as it will enable me to focus my attention on the more important aspects of my inquiry namely:

- (a) What are the causes of violence in amateur hockey, and
- (b) What if any recommendations can be made to improve the situation.

V. CAUSES OF VIOLENCE

Even a cursory reading of the studies and research concerning violence and aggression generally, will indicate that there are many complex causes, some inter-related. The same holds true for violence in hockey.

The social scientists are basically agreed however, that there are two main determinants for most behaviour, violent or otherwise, and these are:

- (a) the model or examples available, particularly if these are successful;
- (b) the conduct encouraged or rewarded in the immediate environment.

After completing my investigation and research, I believe it is possible to determine with some degree of certainty the actual causes of violence in amateur hockey. I would list them as follows:

1. Influence of professional hockey (particularly the NHL) with its emphasis on winning and use of violence as a tactical instrument to achieve that goal.
2. A rule structure (in professional and amateur hockey) which not only tolerates violence but encourages its use by rewarding those who excel at physical intimidation. It also makes reciprocal violence inevitable.
3. Lack of any proper definition of the purpose and objectives of amateur hockey, with its own model and rule structure.
4. Referees: failure to apply existing rules, inconsistency and lack of support from fans, coaches and players.
5. Coaches: failure to control players, and an emphasis on winning games rather than instilling the true value of sport, and developing skills.
6. Lack of respect of players for rules and officials.
7. Undue pressure from parents, fans and coaches with over-emphasis on winning.

RE: 1. Influence of Professional Hockey

It is not surprising that virtually every boy playing hockey is profoundly influenced by the examples portrayed in the NHL.

It is a natural phenomenon for any person to look up to what he has been told are the best, and to attempt to emulate them.

Although there is more than one professional hockey league, I have singled out the NHL for obvious reasons.

Until recent years there was no question that it was the paramount hockey league. At the present time they are still regarded as the best, and obviously they still set most of the standards in hockey. The irony is that if they continue to encourage the present trends in hockey where skill is secondary to physical intimidation, then it is likely that every other hockey nation will surpass North America in actual hockey skills.

The influence has been compounded with the advent of television. Professional sport by its very nature dominates the mass media in its quest for spectators. Now the images presented by TV dwarf the effect of home and school in the minds of most sports-conscious youngsters. If we are to improve the climate for amateur hockey it is important to appreciate the nature and extent of the influence of the professional model.

The unfortunate aspect of the NHL example is most significant because of:

- (a) the emphasis on winning as the sole criterion for success;
- (b) the growing use of violence as a tactical instrument to achieve victory. It is perhaps the only sport, professional or otherwise, that encourages the use of physical intimidation *outside* the rules as a legitimate tactic;
- (c) the attempt to sell hockey to a wide audience in the U.S. who understand a hockey brawl far more easily than the intricacies and finesse of the game;

(d) as a result of (b) and (c) above there has been an increasing glorification of the brawlers, physical intimidators, and "policemen" in the NHL, e.g. "Shultz's army", penalty statistics, etc.

The NHL establishment deny that there is any attempt to "sell violence", but the facts do not support them.

During the public hearing part of my enquiry, the president of the NHL conceded that selling tickets was the main purpose of the NHL, "... it is the business of conducting the sport in a manner that will induce or be conducive to the support of it at the box office... Show business, we are in the entertainment business and that can never be ignored. We must put on a spectacle that will attract people..."⁴

Eleven years ago in a comprehensive series in the *Globe and Mail*, entitled "What's Happened to Hockey", G.E. Mortimer wrote:

"Jack Mehlenbacher, another ex-referee, now has misgivings about the whole structure and philosophy of the NHL. 'The way they're letting hockey get out of hand, they're going to ruin the game. The big wheels of the NHL figure they have to have blood to fill the arenas. I refereed for five years and that was all they were interested in.'"⁵

In talking to numerous players in the NHL and WHA, they all feel that most advertising and selling of the game is over-emphasizing the fighting and brawling at the expense of educating the crowds about the skill and finesse. This past season the advertising for the NBC Game of the Week, showed a film clip of a hockey fight. Can you conceive of any other sport promoting itself in this fashion? The much heralded "Peter Puck" cartoon series designed to educate the American fan as to the intricacies of the game is a case in point. In every segment the players were characterized as brutal top heavy Neanderthal types who were shown demonstrating every conceivable type of foul with great gusto and relish.

Brian Conacher in his book, *Hockey in Canada the Way It Is*, wrote the following:

"The growing incidents of brawling in the game, I believe, is not unconnected with the "image" of the game that now is being presented to the violence-oriented American hockey fan. The large numbers of people that are being exposed to the game now are often not aware of the skills and finesse that gives the game its real appeal. But brawling is something they do understand, so as far as the games, television acceptance, and crowd appeal is concerned, it probably doesn't hurt to have a few good brawls, If there is a little blood so much the better for the people with colour sets."⁶

RE: 2. **Structure of the Rules**

The sick situation in professional hockey is further aggravated by the structure of their rules. In particular it is perhaps the only sport which tolerates fighting as "part of the game".

Those who support fighting seem unconcerned that no other contact sport, (football, rugger, soccer and basketball to name a few) tolerate such illegal and violent conduct.

One needs very little imagination to realize the mayhem which would ensue in, let us say basketball, if fighting was considered "part of the game", and nominal penalties were assessed to the combatants. One can appreciate the justified outrage of legitimate basketball fans if one of the great stars of the game had to prove himself as a brawler to stay in the sport. It is time the real hockey fans insisted that the players be allowed to play hockey.

All players spoken to stated there was tremendous peer pressure to stand and fight. Yet Mr. Campbell when questioned on this point was very reluctant to agree that such pressure did exist.

McMurtry Now it troubles me because I see this more and more in games where, when the play is stopped, quite often a player with less physical ability as a hockey player attempts to assert his physical superiority as a fighter or strongman.

Campbell I think there are efforts made by players to sucker other players off the ice of greater skill, yes. I agree with that.

McMurtry And right now it is extremely difficult for the player who is being provoked and being pushed to turn his back and appear to be running. The pressure of his own team-mates and from the many millions of fans make it an almost impossibility for him to do that.

Campbell No, I don't accept that.

McMurtry Perhaps you should talk to the players sometimes, sir.

Campbell Okay.

McMurtry Because they will tell you. I have talked to many of them on this, and they do not want to come and give evidence for obvious reasons. They feel it would prejudice their career with their superiors. It would prejudice what would happen to them on the ice if they were to say publicly they don't like fighting and they don't like being involved in fighting. Yet they have no alternative, because if they turn their back and appear to be frightened, they will not only be put on the bench but run out of hockey, when they are on the ice...

Campbell Disastrous.

McMurtry Isn't that a possibility that is in fact happening, forcing them to retaliate?

Campbell Your assessment of the situation may be the correct one. *That is not what we are concerned about. At least, I don't think that is what we are concerned about.* (Italics mine.)

The position I want to take is that the National Hockey League is doing its best to bring under control all those objectionable features, particularly those where there is any element of physical risk.

McMurtry All right. Then if you agree with me that this is a possibility that players are forced to retaliate who don't want to retaliate...

Campbell Don't use that type of expression.

McMurtry Or to fight—are forced to fight when they don't want to fight...

Campbell They are not forced to fight at all. Please don't use that kind of an expression. That is a free alternative as far as they are concerned, to fight or not to fight. Don't say "forced". There is nothing forced about it.

McMurtry The structure of the rules is such that they would lose face with their peers, their opposition and any number of million fans if they turn their back.

Campbell You are a lawyer, Mr. McMurtry, and you know it is a free alternative. It is not forced at all.

McMurtry I couldn't disagree with you more strongly.

Campbell All right.

McMurtry To have the sanction there of being embarrassed and ridiculed and to be discussed among your peers and your coach and many millions of fans, that is not one of the most difficult decisions in the world for a person, to turn his back and not fight?

Campbell *I didn't say it wasn't difficult. I said it is an alternative.*

McMurtry *Then if you will agree it is a very difficult alternative, it is apparently what you call the free alternative.*

Campbell *All right.*

McMurtry There is incredible pressure and duress on that player not to turn his back—is that not true?

Campbell I don't think it is as great as you say, *but it is real.*

McMurtry There is a real pressure and duress on that player to stand his ground and to fight?

Campbell *I think so, yes, yes. (Italics mine).*

If anyone seriously believes that the NHL is doing all that it can to prevent provocation and fighting even under the rules they do have, I would suggest they consider the following part of the dialogue between myself and Mr. Campbell.

McMurtry What are you doing about the player who deliberately starts a fight?

Campbell What do you mean "deliberately starts a fight?" We have a rule. We have two sets of rules. We have a rule dealing with fisticuffs at the present time where there is every conceivable differentiation of responsibility for the aggressor and the non-aggressor, the man who responds with a blow and the man who responds with nothing at all except that he doesn't do anything.

We also have a rule which says that anyone who incites another to the commission of a foul shall be subject to a misconduct penalty.

McMurtry Let us talk about that. Would that cover a situation, say, where the whistle goes and another player starts to push a player and shoves his hand in his face?

Campbell *Not necessarily. It would have to be something more provocative than that.*

McMurtry All right. Let us talk about that situation. If the whistle blows and clearly play is stopped and one player physically attempts to provoke or intimidate another player, the player who is being intimidated or provoked, what are his alternatives?

Campbell It all depends on his circumstance. There are a lot of factors that enter into it. *In the first place he has to evaluate his own capability opposite the other party. That is one.*

McMurtry *What does that mean?*

Campbell *His physical capability to respond in kind.*

McMurtry *In other words he has to make an assessment as to whether he can hold his own with this player in a fight?*

Campbell *I think he has to keep that in mind all the time.*

McMurtry *He has to keep that in mind all the time?*

Campbell Yes.

McMurtry All right, continue.

Campbell So if he decides that he would sooner get himself an equivalent penalty he can respond in kind, if he wishes.

McMurtry Right.

Campbell Or if he decides that it would be smarter for him to abstain and let the other fellow take the penalty, that is great; that is his choice.

McMurtry *You just told me he would not have a penalty.*

Campbell *I didn't say that at all.* I said it might not be an infraction of a character that would warrant either a game misconduct or a misconduct penalty, either one, for inciting, I don't know. That is a matter of judgment on the part of the officials.

And the officials, believe me, are men who have had quite a lifetime of experience in this field.

McMurtry Mr. Campbell, I don't pretend to be as knowledgeable about the NHL as you are, but I have watched NHL games for at least 25 years and I have never seen that rule called.

Campbell *Well, let me put it this way: it is not surprising to me that you have not. It is a rule which has had relatively little use. Relatively little use.* (Italics mine).⁸

Mr. Campbell was also questioned regarding the fact that the NHL was alone among sports in their tolerance of fighting.

McMurtry But you do not disagree now that there is no other contact sport in the world that tolerates fighting the way hockey does?

Campbell Well partly that could very well be true.⁹

And later...

McMurtry Has the NHL ever experimented with an attempt to give a match penalty for fights?

Campbell No, not in my era. I don't know of any such that was ever made.

McMurtry It is impossible for you to say what the effect would be?

Campbell That is right. I cannot say positively it would be productive of one result or another. You are right.¹⁰

The present rule structure in hockey is such that according to many players and coaches a boy must fight whether he wants to or not. Because of the fact that very little attempt is made to prevent provocation, and only nominal equal penalties are assessed for fighting, a player has no reason or justification for turning his back and refusing to fight. In fact if a player refuses to fight and an opponent for no particular reason deliberately punches him, and even renders him senseless, the "appropriate" penalty at the present time is a two-minute minor.

With rules and enforcement such as this is it any wonder that we have seen the emergence of the "Broad Street Bullies", of Philadelphia as Stanley Cup Champions.

Physical intimidation may have always been present in hockey, since the days of Conn Smythe's dictum that "if you can't beat them in the alley, you can't beat them on the ice."

What is recent and disturbing however is the emergence of a trend towards controlled and deliberate use of physical intimidation making full use of the present rules and the reluctance of the hockey establishment to eradicate fighting as part of the game.

At the end of the recent Philadelphia-New York series, the brilliant New York star, Brad Park, who, along with several of his team-mates, was provoked into several fights, said:

"Until this series I always considered a hockey fight to be something that happened after a flare-up. As to this team we find that fights are started deliberately."¹¹

In my questioning of Mr. Campbell he denied that any team retained players for the purpose of fighting. When a direct quote from Mr. Shultz seemed to contradict Mr. Campbell's position he merely replied that he was not concerned what the player himself said.¹²

I have made a point of discussing the effect of the "no fighting" rule in college and international hockey with many players who have not only had extensive experience in those leagues but have also played professional hockey in the WHA and NHL. Without exception they have all told me that it was a more rewarding experience playing in an environment where fighting was not considered part of the game. It not only elevated the importance of hockey skills but reduced other undesirable aspects of violence, including illegal use of the stick. It is true that some players experienced a few bad international games but in every case they laid the blame on poor officials and not the rules. In fact they found they could predict the type of game often by the referee assigned.

Perhaps the person with as great an insight in this area as anyone is Robert Nadin, referred to earlier in my report, who has not only refereed international and Olympic games but has held referee's clinics in Europe.

In a brief to me he said the following:

"Fighting should not be part of the game and players who fight should be ejected from the game by being assessed game misconducts or match penalties."

"The removal of fighting would in no way detract from the skill, excitement, speed and competitive nature of the game. From my experience in international hockey, including refereeing the 1972 Olympic Games in Sapporo, Japan, where fighting results in expulsion from the game, I find that the games are every bit as skillful, competitive and exciting. Removal of fighting does not lead to numerous other infractions as an emotional outlet. The same results apply in high school and inter-collegiate hockey where fighting results in expulsion from the game.

"The misconception that removal of fighting results in an increase in other infractions such as high sticking, spearing, slashing and hooking is completely groundless. Players learn to restrain and control themselves. By allowing fighting, on the other hand, you do not train an individual to restrain or control himself, and as a result numerous other infractions occur. Fighting is totally unnecessary and should not be part of the game especially at the minor level."

It is also worth mentioning the dramatic effect of the rule changes in Toronto Public School Hockey.

At the public hearing, Gary Leech, a teacher, and the president of the Toronto Public Schools Athletic Association gave evidence as follows:

McMurtry Have you had any problems over the last years with violence in public school hockey?

Leech During the late sixties and early into the seventies the organization noticed an increase in not only violence in hockey with regard to fighting, but abuse officials were taking, swearing from the players, etc. etc., and it came to a head at the finals at the Gardens—the Maple Leaf Gardens was good enough to give the facilities for the finals in 1971—when there was a bench-emptying incident and two other fights in three out of seven games...so the organization decided something had to be done so we instituted a no-fighting rule.

Would you like me to read that?

McMurtry Yes.

1. The player shall be removed immediately for the duration of the game.
2. The team shall be assessed the appropriate penalty for fighting as so defined in the rules. (These are CAHA rules.)
3. The player's name shall be forwarded to the sports secretary by the game official immediately following the game.
4. No team so affected shall be allowed to play in a league game or playoff game until the incident has been investigated by the Board of Reference to investigate the situation to determine further action.

So if a player is in fact involved in fighting, his name is forwarded directly to the executive. The day after, a Board of Reference is called. The two players involved or more players involved, appear, the principals appear, the coaches appear and action is decided.

Since 1971, which includes the winter of 1972, 1973 and 1974, three seasons, we have had approximately 2,100 hockey games and have had one incident that was actually called a fight. It really was not. The gloves were dropped and they wrestled. The players were thrown out, the Board of Reference was called, and action was taken. The boys were suspended for one game only.

Now if I may make a comment as to who plays in our leagues, we have boys under 16, from 15 years of age down to about 10 years of age. 75% of them are MTHL hockey players; 24% of the remaining are house league players and only about 1% don't play organized hockey. So we have very competitive teams, mostly MTHL calibre. How competent they would be in the MTHL it is hard to say.

At any rate, the MTHL hockey players had to learn a bit of a different system. They learn very, very quickly when they are told "No fighting", and they have not fought and, incidentally, the abuse that the officials have been taking has diminished also. Any player ejected from the game for abusive language, et cetera, still must come before this Board of Reference.¹³

Perhaps the most illogical point made by the defenders of "fighting" in the game, is that to assess an automatic game misconduct would encourage situations whereby attempts would be made to provoke a star player into a fight causing his ejection.

What they consistently fail to realize is that by not having such a rule a player has no real option. If there was an automatic game misconduct then any player could refuse to fight without losing face. Again the experience of all other contact sports bears this out.

Of course it is "part of the game",—if you *make it* part of the game by your rules. It can just as easily be removed from the game with a few simple rule changes—and the intent to enforce those rules.

A revealing indication as to the real motivation behind the NHL was their recent rule changes this spring following the brawl-filled Stanley Cup playoffs. It was apparent that the TV networks did not like the inordinate delays caused by the interminable fighting which once consumed over three and one half hours of prime time. The TV networks represent money and their wishes were to be fulfilled... What was the solution? To take measures to prevent fighting? No! Fighting will still be tolerated—but there will be a team penalty if any player delays after a penalty or a fight in proceeding directly to the penalty box!

There is strong evidence from the social scientists that tolerating a rule structure such as exists in hockey reinforces and rewards violence outside the rules and leads to even more violence in the game.

Fighting is not a safety-valve, but, on the contrary, it becomes an approach to the game whereby a desirable end, victory can be achieved by illegal and violent means. You can not blame a Dave Shultz for his approach to the game; when you consider that it is a direct result of the training he has received, and that he has been encouraged throughout his career for doing exactly what he is doing. When young boys see that a Shultz is not only tolerated but rewarded, then it is inconceivable that he would not be emulated.

Professor Michael Smith of York University who has published several papers on the question of violence in hockey, was requested by me to submit a brief specifically on the point of whether or not tolerating violence in the context of hockey not only leads to more violence in hockey but violence outside the context of hockey. After reviewing all the available research on the point he concluded:

"If it is taken as given that minor and professional hockey in Canada are characterized by player violence, that a vast audience is exposed to this via the mass media, and that much of the violence is legitimated ("just part of the game"), research suggests at least two consequences that go beyond the game itself. (Italics mine).

"First the scope of what is considered legitimate behaviour in and out of sport, may be widened; acts once considered deviant become accepted as normal.

*"Second, where there is a climate of approval of violence, conduct that may precipitate collective outbursts is likely to occur."*¹⁴

When every other contact sport (with the exception of lacrosse) refuses to accept the legitimation of brawling and fighting one cannot help but wonder at the position of the NHL.

When numerous players, coaches and officials with extensive experience in inter-collegiate, international and professional hockey, unanimously disagree with Mr. Campbell's assumptions regarding the effect of their rules, then one has reason to doubt the NHL position.

When a comprehensive review of the research and studies of the social scientists indicates that tolerating or encouraging any violence leads to further or more extensive violence, then one's doubt becomes incredulity.

When all the available research to date supports the proposition that the acceptance of hockey violence encourages violence outside the context of hockey, then one's incredulity turns to concern.

When the evidence strongly indicates that there is a conscious effort to sell the violence in hockey to enrich a small group of show-business entrepreneurs at the expense of a great sport (not to mention the corruption of an entire generation's concept of sport) then one's concern grows to outrage.

RE: 3. Lack of Definition of Objectives and Purposes of Amateur Hockey

The spectator-oriented, win-at-all-costs model of professional sport is neither an appropriate nor a healthy model for amateur hockey. Yet from the semi-professional Junior A leagues to the seven year old tyke house leagues, amateur hockey appears to have no other model.

Historically amateur hockey has been influenced, dominated, and partially financed by professional hockey.

Until 1967, the CAHA could not even determine their own rule structure without the consent of the NHL.

Perhaps the single most significant revelation in my entire investigation was that nowhere in the OHA constitution, by-laws, rules or regulations are the purpose and objectives of amateur hockey defined or even considered.

In fairness to the present officials of the OHA and affiliated associations, they are responsible for an enormous logistical task of regulating hundreds of thousands of players and teams, coaches and officials.

They are handicapped by the pressure of an enormous administrative load, lack of funds, shortage of volunteers, and are constantly subjected to criticism (occasionally justified but more often uninformed) of parents, coaches and the media.

What most people fail to understand is that the OHA is not separate and apart from the teams they regulate.

The executive is made up of representative members from the various teams and organizations, who have voluntarily joined the association.

They are often criticized over their rules and regulations but without these there would be a chaotic hockey jungle.

The real problem is that they are all volunteers without the necessary background, time or resources to adopt a philosophy divorced from the professional influence and image.

There is no doubt that many have a real concern for the problems presently facing amateur hockey. I am satisfied that the only solution will be to work within the present army of volunteers because no government could possibly replace the vast reservoir of energy and goodwill now participating in amateur hockey.

New directions and guidance are, however, desperately needed.

A philosophy regarding the purpose of amateur hockey must be developed separate and apart from the criteria governing professional sport.

The rules, coaching and league structures must reflect that philosophy.

It is encouraging to see that the OHA has already taken some steps in organizing coaching and referees' clinics. These can only be effective, however, if the approach and content of these clinics is based on a proper concept of amateur sport and they have sufficient financial support to reach all those involved.

RE: 4. Referees

Although referees are often unfairly made the scapegoats for all manner of evil in sport, there is no doubt that the calibre of refereeing can have a strong influence on the character of any game.

At the present time referees in amateur hockey are in short supply, and many games suffer and deteriorate into violence where:

- (a) the existing rules are not enforced;
- (b) the rulings are not consistent;
- (c) there is lack of respect for the official.

In talking to players and coaches, their experience indicates that a badly refereed game will cause frustration, anger and a desire to retaliate among the players. In Europe where the players have surpassed the skill of most of their referees this is perhaps the greatest problem in the sport.

It is also significant that several witnesses to the Bramalea-Hamilton game believed that the failure of the referee to call some obvious fouls early in the game definitely contributed to the escalation of the violence in that game.

There is presently a rule in both the CAHA and the NHL which calls for a ten-minute misconduct for any player who deliberately incites or provokes another player physically or verbally. This would cover the many situations after a whistle where one player attempts to provoke or intimidate another by a deliberate shove or hand in the face or other "cheap shot".

The reason for its non-enforcement is probably due to the NHL example more than any other factor.

It is understandable that if they have no other model or philosophy, even referees will be influenced by the top professionals, particularly where they are using the same rules.

RE: 5. Coaches

If one individual in the entire hockey environment were to be singled out as the key person it would have to be the coach.

Lloyd Percival described the essential ingredients of any coach as one who has the ability:

- (a) to motivate;
- (b) to communicate and
- (c) to establish a system and the necessary discipline to implement it.

Assuming an individual has the above prerequisites, then it is obvious that he should be in the best position to control his players and establish the desired standard of conduct.

It is an incredible thing that so little attention is paid to the qualifications of an amateur hockey coach. Any concerned or responsible parent will insist that their children only be exposed to school teachers who have had a proper training in educational skills with some understanding of sociological, physiological and psychological aspects of human behavior.

However a boy's hockey coach can have a more profound effect on his development as a person and his sense of values than most of his classroom teachers. A coach can determine or influence a boy's self-image, his relationship with his peers, his attitude towards authority, not to mention his concept of sport, and his ability to cope with success and failure.

Yet tens of thousands of young boys are sent to the rink without any real assessment or control over the man behind the bench.

Again the majority of coaches now involved in minor-league hockey, notwithstanding their good intentions, have really no concept of coaching other than the image portrayed by the professionals.

Often it is easier for a coach to just stress the aggressive and violent side of hockey rather than the skills.

In talking to officials, it is also distressing to learn how much abuse they receive from most coaches. It is impossible to expect boys to learn to respect officials if their own coach does not set a proper example.

In the public hearing, I had an opportunity to question a gentleman who has had a forty year career in amateur hockey as player, referee and coach. His practical experience was matched only by his sincerity and good intentions. His approach to hockey violence was however questionable, even if understandable.

When I specifically asked him if it was not true that under the present rule structure a coach was often forced to tell his players that they must fight or retaliate. He replied as follows:

"It has not been in my case. I will tell you that right now. All I have ever told my players, at any level, at any time is *stand your ground. If there is going to be a fight you get the first shot.*" (Italics mine).¹⁵

Contrast this with the attitude of the great Russian coach Tarasov:

"Courage means ability to stay out of a fight. I know just how hard it is to contain yourself, how unfair it seems when you have to calmly take it from some overstrung athlete. I know just how hard it is to hold yourself back from paying him back in kind, but real courage calls for self-control and patience."¹⁶

Of course Tarasov does not have to contend with our rules and the constant example of the NHL.

Our own Billy Harris, Coach of the Year in the WHA, is a constructive voice in the wilderness. He put it this way in a taped interview with me:

"I tell my kids if a guy gets up there and high-sticks you, avoid trouble. Turn your back. Show some courage, but turn your back. Don't be afraid to be embarrassed. This is a way of showing some courage. You're not afraid to be embarrassed because it has been the thing to do for some thirty years. Turn your back on him. Let's change things."¹⁷

RE: 6. **Lack of Respect of Players for Rules and Officials**

It is shocking to learn that in the past season alone the OHA has meted out 48 suspensions for punching, cross-checking, spearing or shoving referees and linesmen. In two attacks, officials sustained fractured arms.

This is one area where amateur hockey is probably worse than at the professional level. Scotty Morrison the referee in chief for the NHL, told me of an occasion recently where he refereed a minor midget game and was subjected to worse abuse than he ever experienced in the NHL, from youngsters who were unaware of his background.

Four obvious reasons present themselves:

- (a) the fact that youngsters have learned not to respect the calibre of officials in minor hockey;
- (b) the lack of support by some leagues and coaches for the officials;
- (c) the lack of control over the players by the coaches and leagues;
- (d) the examples set by parents.

Whatever the causes, steps must be taken to support all game officials.

RE: 7. **Undue Pressure from Parents and Coaches**

Children do not instinctively believe that winning is everything in sport. If one has any reason to doubt the truth of that statement you need only recall your own experiences of shinny as a boy. Games lasted for hours. There were endless permutations and combinations of sides. No one kept score, and you could not wait for tomorrow to get back into the game. You measured yourself, by yourself, taking pride in any new move learned or developed. The same holds true today if you watch a road hockey game (it's hard to locate a good game of shinny these days).

It's easy to see where they learn, however. They are not the only ones influenced by the professional model. When coaches and parents hysterically demand victory at any price they seldom realize just how great the cost is.

One revealing fact I learned in my investigation was that EVERY professional player interviewed believed he learned his true skills and love of the game away from structured leagues and adult supervision.

This is perhaps the greatest irony of all. The obsessive influence and involvement of the adults may in the long run destroy the most essential ingredient of all in developing hockey skill—sheer love of the game.

In an interesting study on the psychological effects of competitive sport on youngsters, Professor Harvey Scott of the University of Alberta made some interesting comments:

"It is sad to say but too many sport organizations, perhaps most of the competitive programmes for the young, appear to function not for promoting participation but as elimination systems. While the production of non-participants may be "functional" for many parts of our "consumer society", it is doubtful whether such an outcome is really desirable in the physical activity area. Surely what we need instead are sport organizations which "turn on" the vast majority of people to activity. In order to achieve such "sport for all" outcomes we might begin by contemplating the type of organizational environments necessary to provide enhanced self-esteem for all participants.

"How do you begin to develop a citizenry that enjoys the body and loves participation? How do you develop positive sporting self-images for all? While it is impossible presently to provide "cookbook" answers to such questions, it may be clearly indicated that the way is not through competitive tryout programmes for young children. While sporting systems of this type may greatly enhance the egos

of the few children who "make it", it must be remembered this self-esteem is conditional upon and made at the expense of the majority of children, who fail in the tryout situation. While such programmes will continue to meet with the favours of the parents of this minority of "winners", in the opinion of the writer, the loss of this parental "ego-trip" is a small price to pay for ending the early elimination of many in childhood sport.

"Competitive sport clearly has a place in our society. Introduced after people have developed positive self-reliant images of physical self, freely-chosen competitive sport may well provide self fulfillment for many participants. However, introduced before the person loves and is sure of his body and his physical self, it functions primarily as a destroyer of self and eliminator of participants."¹⁸

Minor league hockey is not the only sport which has suffered from the influence of the over-zealous parent or coach. Larry Csonka, the great football star, recently made the following observations about Little League Football:

"As for football, well, we've got to go down into the junior leagues and the little leagues and clean up the nonsense that is going on. You know what I think about the junior football that I've seen? I think it's ruining a lot of our kids. . .

"Well now I'm thinking of writing a book on the subject, something that would educate parents who entrust their kids to these kind of men. These coaches, so-called, are causing a lot of psychological and physical damage to kids who haven't even reached puberty yet. Hell, I don't want to go through the whole thing and rip it to shreds. I just want to propose an alternative to what we have now. What is wrong with flag football or touch football for kids? Do we really need all the violence and the false character-building and the emphasis on winning that is going on now? No, I don't think we do. Football should be fun for kids, they should be able to play an hour or so a day and enjoy it."

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations which I propose for amateur hockey fall into eleven general areas as follows:

1. Define the objectives and purpose of amateur hockey.
2. Create a rule structure and environment consistent with the philosophy and objectives of true amateur hockey, e.g. fighting should result in an automatic game misconduct penalty.
3. Expand coaches' clinics and eventually make certification of coaches mandatory.
4. Establish procedures whereby coaches are responsible for the conduct of players.
5. Expand program of referees' certification and clinics.
6. Make efforts to educate fans and parents as to the purpose and objectives of amateur hockey.
7. Support further research in the field of sports psychology, physical education and coaching methods.
8. Establish an Ontario Hockey Council to:
 - (a) define purposes and objectives of amateur hockey;
 - (b) design rule structure consistent with purpose and objectives;
 - (c) act as final appeal tribunal from various hockey associations;
 - (d) ensure that coaches' clinics and referees' clinics are operated in accord with proper philosophy for amateur hockey;
 - (e) recommend allocation of Government funds in support of amateur hockey;
 - (f) assist in educating public as to role of amateur hockey.
9. Involve Government to a greater extent in financially supporting recommendations 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.
10. Consider a more school-oriented hockey program.
11. Make representation to the media relating to their responsibility.

RE: 1. **Define Objectives and Purpose of Amateur Hockey**

For too many years, it has been assumed that the entire amateur hockey structure was a kindergarten for the pros. Less than 1% of the boys playing in organized hockey will ever turn professional.

It is a legitimate ambition for a boy to want to play professional hockey, but the system must not be designed just for this group. The irony is that with an improved environment at the lower age levels and an increased emphasis on skill development, the standard of player will actually improve and more boys will stay in hockey.

Once and for all, it must be established that there is a purpose to amateur hockey beyond that of training professionals.

Fun, recreation, healthy athletes and the development of skills must take precedence over winning games and championships, and building professional careers.

The goal must be to encourage participation regardless of age or ability, and not to focus on the elite all-stars.

The educational and socializational aspects of amateur sport must be stressed over and above the winning of games.

The game itself, and the joy of participation must always be more important than any player, team or championship.

This attitude does in fact prevail in rugby. It is perhaps significant that no other sport that I am aware of makes such a rigid distinction between professional and amateur as does rugby.

Thomas Tutko, the famous sports psychologist makes the following observation:
"The pre-occupation with, "winning only", and being Number 1 is a sick pre-occupation for (amateur) sports. It is very painful to think of all the youngsters who love sports but who are being eliminated at every stage just because they are not going to be "winners", because they're too short or too slow or too weak. "The genuine benefit of athletics—health, sociability and developing personal psychological growth, co-operation, loyalty and pride—are being undermined."²⁰

RE: 2. Rule Structure

The rules of the game are one of the most important means of creating a suitable environment where skill and positive attitudes are reinforced over the negative aspects such as the tactical use of violence.

There is absolutely no reason that fighting, attempts to intimidate, or using a stick to hurt or intimidate should be tolerated at any time, under any circumstances in hockey, particularly amateur hockey. Nothing short of a game misconduct will be effective in this area. The sooner steps are taken to see that fighting, intimidation and provocation of an opponent are no longer "part of the game", the healthier hockey will be.

In addition to the above obvious step which should be taken at all levels, a careful analysis should be made to determine an appropriate rule structure for each level of amateur hockey.

A very strong case can be made for completely different rules governing boys under fourteen. Experienced physical education specialists like William L'Heureux, Lloyd Percival and Tom Watt believe that, in the early development years, boys should concentrate on the skills and should not have to be concerned or pre-occupied with defending themselves even from legal checks. It has been their experience that the more skill that a boy develops the less reliance he will place on aggression and violence.

The professional rules and interpretations relating to boarding, interference and slashing to name a few are totally inappropriate if we are to create a proper environment for sport.

There should be a very marked distinction between our approach to a clean hard body check and intentional "cheap shots" and provocation no matter how minor.

It is unfortunate that more people do not appreciate the effect that tolerating or encouraging even small infractions, outside of the rules and after the whistle, can have on the character of a game and the participants.

W- Contact sport, in itself, need not be violent and it can be healthy.

There is a world of difference between the exuberance a boy feels with solid body contact and the use of force to intimidate an opponent.

It is important that coaches and parents understand this difference. Seldom if ever does an athlete resent a body check within the rules. In fact most relish it, whether on the giving or receiving end. It is usually when the parents and coaches emphasize retaliation and "getting even", that contact sport degenerates into violence.

Consideration should be given to allowing linesmen to call any deliberate foul. It is important that a philosophy develop whereby reliance is made on the referees to call infractions and the tradition of retaliation is removed from the game.

RE: 3. Education of Coaches

One of the truly positive steps taken by the OHA in recent years is their program of coaches' clinics, under the very able direction of Ron Smith who has a sound background in physical education and hockey.

This program is of fundamental importance and is one area where real progress can be made. Ideally there should be a mandatory certification program for ALL coaches in amateur hockey. There will, of course, be various levels of certification but it is most important that even the house league coach at the lowest age level have a short course in the philosophy and purpose of amateur hockey if nothing else. It will also be through this educational process that healthier attitudes towards officials and competition will be developed.

At the present time the OHA does not have sufficient funds even to publicize properly the available clinics. With government involvement through the guidelines of the Provincial Hockey Council (see Recommendation No. 8) not only will the program be expanded but it can be publicized in such a way as to create real incentives for amateur coaches to raise their qualifications. Some hockey associations in the province have already made certification mandatory. With the proper assistance and availability of clinics there is no reason that all coaches should not be certified. Hopefully the individual associations will voluntarily agree to the program. If not, any Government funds should be withheld until they conform.

RE: 4. Responsibility of Coaches for Conduct of Players

Once having been certified, coaches should continue to be monitored. He is [or should be] the most significant individual in determining the attitude and behavior of his players. If it is apparent that he condones or encourages a violent approach to the game, he should be disciplined. If he is not able to change his attitudes, he should be removed from the game.

One obvious procedure would be to make the coach answerable for any game or match penalty assessed against any of his players. On a second occurrence, he should have to make an explanation in writing, and a third incident should result in his suspension until he appears before the appropriate association tribunal.

The necessity for such accountability appears obvious. The practical implementation of the procedure would require more assistance to the associations in order to keep proper records, etc. A central system could be established for all associations in the Province. Hopefully the Government will see the extent of the need and furnish the necessary support.

RE: 5. Referees

This is another area where the OHA and CAHA have made initial steps in setting up a program for certification of referees.

In Ontario we are particularly fortunate in having Robert Nadin to direct the program. Here again, Government support is essential, as the financial resources are not available in the OHA or the other associations to make the program as effective or universal as it could be.

It is imperative that the standard of referees be upgraded to ensure that:

- (a) they apply the rules of the game;
- (b) they are consistent;
- (c) they have the respect of the players, coaches and fans;
- (d) there is a uniform philosophy towards the game of amateur hockey.

It is important that the referees be given the support of the various associations, coaches and players. One of the present difficulties in amateur hockey is attracting good referees, in view of the extensive abuse they receive. This problem should be constantly considered in the education of coaches and public.

RE: 6. Education of Parents and Fans

If the recommendations relating to the rules, referees and coaches outlined above are carried out, there will be an automatic improvement in the attitude of the fans and parents and the entire climate of minor league hockey.

Nevertheless, a direct attempt must be made to reach this group, particularly the parents.

One way which could have some effect is for the Provincial Hockey Council to prepare a statement of the purpose of amateur hockey which will be forwarded to parents of all registered players. In addition, further releases dealing with related topics, such as attitudes, coaching techniques and effect of competition on youngsters, should be sent from time to time to parents. Lloyd Percival found from experience that most parents are extremely pleased to receive guidance and advice from interested experts as to the proper way to motivate their children without the adverse results that often occur with the most well-intentioned but uninformed parent.

RE: 7. Support of Research

Two interesting features of my investigation and research were:

- (a) There is an increasing number of well-qualified educators, social scientists and physical education experts now doing research on all aspects of sport, and
- (b) very little practical use has been made of most of their findings.

It is recommended that the Government support by grants, or otherwise, further research in these areas.

Two examples of the type of research I am referring to are as follows:

- (a) The University of Windsor, through their Sports Institute for Research and in association with the other bodies such as the CIAU and appropriate mental health organizations, are preparing a symposium next year to examine the effects of various types of competition on the participants involved. The Ministry of Community and Social Services should consider becoming involved.
- (b) The University of Western Ontario Department of Physical Education under William L'Heureux is embarking on a program whereby they are analysing, by using control programs in various minor leagues, the effect of various rule changes.

The proposed Ontario Hockey Council could act as a central agency to accumulate information and research. The Council could also make recommendations to the Government as to how available funds for research could be distributed.

RE: 8. Establishment of Ontario Hockey Council

Ideally, this Council should be composed of a group of responsible persons with a solid representative background in hockey, coaching, physical education, sports psychology, health and recreation. This body should have representation from the various associations but be separate from them. It would be answerable directly to the Ministry of Community and Social Services but again separate from the Government. We have a wealth of appropriate people in the Province to provide such a group.

It would be important to have some members from the associations (for example, the president of the OHA, or his nominee) but the emphasis should be on experts in the fields mentioned above.

This group would have the initial responsibility of defining the purpose and objectives of amateur hockey.

The Council would analyse and structure the rules in a way which would be consistent with the aims and objectives previously determined.

It would also supervise the curriculum of the coaches' and referees' clinics, and would act as a resource centre for information for amateur hockey in the province.

The day-to-day administration and regulation of the individual leagues would be left to the present associations.

The Council would report directly to the Ministry of Community and Social Services, with recommendations as to how available funds should be allocated.

A proper quorum of this body, which should not be too large, would also be available to sit as a final appeal tribunal for decisions made by the various associations. This would avoid the present inadequate system where individuals or teams either:

- (a) feel they are appealing to an organization from a decision made by the same organization, or
- (b) attempt to bring the matter to court at great expense only to find that the courts often do not want to hear the case or are not too concerned with the issues.

It is important to make the distinction between the role of this Council and the various associations. It is essential that this group have the expertise and ability to reflect on the proper approach and philosophy for the sport. At the same time there will continue to be full utilization of the volunteers presently involved in amateur hockey. The major difference will be that they will have a group of educators and experts giving the needed guidance and direction now so sadly lacking.

RE: 9. Financial Involvement of Government

For the reasons covered above it is obvious that amateur hockey has an enormous educational and social impact on the entire community.

It is not only desirable for Government to assist in supporting the positive programs which could improve the environment in amateur hockey, but it would be most unfortunate if it did not become more involved.

Four areas which have been outlined above are:

- 1. education and certification of coaches;
- 2. instruction and certification of referees;
- 3. education of public, particularly parents;
- 4. support of research.

There will also be a necessary commitment to establish the Provincial Hockey Council (Recommendation No. 8).

In addition some consideration should be given to more administrative grants to the actual associations regulating the various teams, (e.g. OHA, MTHL, NOHA, OMHA). At present the OHA receives about 17% of its annual revenues from the Province. The bulk of their revenue comes from playoff gates (47%). Only 3% comes from the NHL as most of the funds paid by the professionals go to the individual teams.

It is not a healthy situation in amateur sport to have the regulatory body depend on either the professionals or the box office to sustain themselves.

Sponsors in the community will still be essential to support most teams but the associations who regulate these teams should be financially independent.

RE: 10. School-Oriented Hockey Program

Amateur sport is a vital part of the educational process of any sports-loving boy. Hockey in particular is of desperate importance to many of our youth, and, as mentioned previously the effect of his experiences in sport may have a far more profound influence on his character and attitudes than any part of his academic education.

Schools have gradually allowed minor hockey to become community-oriented rather than school-oriented. The practical considerations of ice time, arenas and equipment are some of the reasons. Many educators do not wish to have the responsibility of organizing and maintaining minor league hockey.

I am not satisfied that consideration should not be given to a more school-oriented hockey structure. The emphasis should be on wide participation not elite representative teams. This should be particularly so at the public school level. It amazes one that we have sufficient funds for swimming pools but not rinks for school children. This is one area in which no immediate changes can be implemented. It does seem however, that all the evidence indicates that schools would be the healthiest environment for children to be exposed to competitive hockey and structural training, particularly at the lower ages. Hopefully more research and thought might develop a system where the best features of both hockey structures could be maintained.

RE: 11. Make Representation to the Media Relating to their Responsibility

It is suggested that the Government make representation to the news media, particularly the television industry, to see if they would assume more responsibility and de-emphasize those aspects of the professional game which are undesirable as an example to our youth.

A brief might also be sent to the appropriate Federal Authority (CRTC) to see if they would consider taking any steps in this area.

It is worth noting that the coverage in professional football seems to emphasize far more the finesse of the game, and this in a game that has more than its share of violence.

VII. FINAL COMMENT

In many ways, the field of sport is something of a paradigm of our whole manner of life — the enjoyment of doing things well for their own sake has been subverted by dedication to dead glory symbols like scores, marks or money. The fulfilment of all has been sacrificed to the promotion of elites. The joy of participation has given way to the stupor of spectatorism. If the sports-loving boy in our school yards is not to fall into this pattern, if his exuberance of physique is to remain open and generous, we should start rethinking what sport is all about. It seems to me that it is to have fun, with bodily abandon and a grin. If so, I wonder what scoreboards, winning, first teams and watchers have to do with it. Games will be what they should be when scores (if there are any) are forgotten in five minutes and the stands and sidelines are wiped out.²¹

Perhaps the saddest comment I have heard from some hockey officials is to the effect that the disease in amateur hockey is a natural consequence of a sick society. Why, they ask, try to cure it? How, they argue, can you overcome dollars, greed, the mass media and a society growing more violent and permissive each day? Amateur hockey is only part of one sport. How can you reform one sport in a world moving in the opposite direction?

It would be naive to think that we can alter the moral approach of those whose sole criterion is profit.

It would be unrealistic to suppose that we can, overnight, solve all the problems in amateur hockey.

I refuse, however, to accept that we cannot do much better.

Politicians and leaders have perverted the use of power for centuries before Watergate, yet that is no reason to abandon democracy or replace any attempt at social order by anarchy.

The original Olympic concept has been corrupted by nations and commercial interests who would use victory in sport for political or financial gain. Yet the idealism which gave birth to that concept still survives.

Hockey in Canada is plagued by many ills.

The most enduring and significant phenomenon, however, is still that of literally hundreds of thousands of young Canadian boys carrying stick and skates to whatever sheet of ice is available, just to be part of a game which at one time has cast its spell over most of us.

More than any language, race, custom, flag or anthem, hockey is the Canadian common denominator. We can see the present trends, and we know that if we do not act the situation will deteriorate even further.

The options are clear.

We can give up our game by default to those who would use it for their own ends.

The other alternative is to say "NO"—it can be better—there is a higher purpose to sport that is worth pursuing. Even if we do not achieve our Utopia it is important to know what sport should be, so at least we can move in that direction. I have been heartened by the number of persons who are determined to do just that.

Reform is never easy. It means changing the existing order—often at the expense of vested interests and against the weight of entrenched prejudices.

There will always be those ready to support the established traditions with such mindless dogma as “just part of the game”, because they know no other.

There may always be overly-ambitious parents motivated by the lure of a lucrative bonus, prepared to follow any creed.

There may always be frustrated hyper-competitive individuals attempting a vicarious ego-trip regardless of the price paid by young boys in their charge.

There may always be promoters prepared to encourage violence in order to sell tickets and titillate the crowds.

But reform is possible.

It means having a vision of what true amateur sport, and particularly hockey, should be and the courage and conviction to follow that truth.

People are needed who bring to mind the comment of George Bernard Shaw who spoke of how some men see things as they are and ask why, while others see things as they could be and ask why not?

It is perhaps not inappropriate to recall also the words of one of the great reformers in history, Sir Samuel Romilly.

In the early nineteenth century he had the vision and audacity to question the savage Criminal Code which, among other things, applied the death penalty for the theft of five shillings.

His words, spoken in the House of Lords when he knew he would not succeed, at that time, in his attempt to humanize the barbaric penal code, are an inspiration to anyone who believes in reform but despairs at the momentous task.

“From the spirit which I have seen, I shall not be surprised, and I certainly will not be deterred, by any vote of this night. I am not so unacquainted with the nature of prejudice as not to have observed that it strikes deep root; that it flourishes in all soils and spreads its branches in every direction. I have observed also, that flourish as it may, if must by laws sacred and immutable, wither and decay after the powerful and repeated touch of truth.”²²

Sport, and particularly hockey, need not be a symptom of a sick society. Hockey can be an effective instrument to improve the social conditions. Hockey can be a positive educational force—a model—to instil values such as co-operation, personal discipline, tolerance and understanding—a catalyst to promote fellowship and mutual respect among individuals and peoples—a celebration of speed, courage and finesse. Rather than a divisive force, fueled by calculated animosities, it can and should be a bond between participants, with a shared commitment to excellence, and the common love of a game, hockey, which perhaps more than any other can give one a sense of physical exhilaration and sheer joy of participation.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Globe and Mail, Monday, May 6, 1974. S. 1.
- ² Windsor Star, Tuesday, June 4, 1974. page 37.
- ³ *The Death of Hockey*, Toronto New Press, page 58.
- ⁴ Public Hearing Transcript, page 636.
- ⁵ Mortimer, G.E. *What's Happened to Hockey?* Series of articles from Globe and Mail, March 1963.
- ⁶ Conacher, Brian. *Hockey in Canada: The Way It Is*. Simon and Schuster, 1971, page 119.
- ⁷ Public Hearing Transcript, pages 668-671.
- ⁸ Public Hearing Transcript, pages 665-667.
- ⁹ Public Hearing Transcript, page 642.
- ¹⁰ Public Hearing Transcript, page 649.
- ¹¹ Globe and Mail, Monday, May 6, 1974. S. 1.
- ¹² Public Hearing Transcript, page 646.
- ¹³ Public Hearing Transcript, page 1135.
- ¹⁴ Smith, Michael D., Brief submitted to W.R. McMurtry, Q.C., Commissioner, on "Effects of Hockey Violence on Behaviour Outside Hockey", May, 1974.
- ¹⁵ Public Hearing Transcript, page 420.
- ¹⁶ Tarasov, Anatoli. *Road to Olympics*. Simon and Schuster, 1969, page 155.
- ¹⁷ Videotape Interview, Global TV May 31, 1974 (Arranged through the courtesy of Laverne Barnes).
- ¹⁸ Scott, Harvey, "Competitive Sport Outcomes, Self-fulfillment and Participation or Self-destruction and Elimination".
- ¹⁹ Ralbovsky, Marty, "But Who is Larry Csonka?" *Sport*, March, 1972, Volume 53, No. 3, page 94.
- ²⁰ Tutko, Thomas, "In Sports Winning Really Isn't Everything", *People*, Volume No. 11, page 49.
- ²¹ McMurtry, John, "The Cruelty of Competitive Sport" *Monday Morning* May 1969, page 44.
- ²² Sir Samuel Romilly, Q.C., M.P., (House of Lords, Vol. 13, Appendix page 139).

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4. Ontario Minor Hockey Association, Constitution 1973-1974.
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6. Toronto Public School Athletic Association (PSAA), Coaches' Code, Players' Code, Spectators' Code.
7. NHL Playing Rules Situation Handbook.

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